

VZCZCXRO7782

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHRL #0222/01 0361120
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051120Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6906
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAHLG/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000222

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [GM](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY CHERTOFF ENGAGES MUSLIMS IN GERMANY ON
COUNTERTERRORISM

REF: 06 BERLIN 3529

11. Summary: On January 26, 2007, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff exchanged views on counterterrorism efforts with twelve leaders of Germany's Muslim communities over dinner at the residence of Ambassador Timken. This event was the highest level of engagement with Muslims in Germany to date for Mission Germany's Policy Roundtable (reftel), which seeks to strengthen and expand contacts with Muslim leaders, counter misinformation and misperceptions about U.S. policies, develop a sense of shared interests, and help undermine the bases for extremism and anti-Americanism. Secretary Chertoff, Ambassador Timken, and the Muslim guests

SIPDIS

shared ideas on the causes of and solutions for extremism among Muslims in Germany. End Summary.

Addressing the Roots of Extremism

12. The Muslim representatives included leaders of religious and secular organizations, as well as a member of the German national parliament, a scholar, and a prominent businessman. Among the views expressed by the guests was the claim that many extremists do not understand the Koran, which some guests said requires obedience to the laws of the host country and repudiation of violence. Other participants claimed that Germany has not yet fully embraced being a country of immigrants, thereby contributing to Islamophobia and alienation of Muslim youth. As one participant noted, many Muslim Germans, although born or at least educated in Germany, do not feel that they are accepted as "real" Germans. He observed that this sense of exclusion contributes to the appeal of extremist groups, which can provide a sense of recognition and identity to isolated youth. Most participants seemed to agree that Muslim community leaders need to continue both mosque-based and secular educational programs aimed at moderating radicalized youth. A highlight of the evening was a participant's passionate expression of gratitude to the Secretary and Ambassador for the American intervention in Bosnia. This speaker, who had lost family members in the Balkan conflict, pointed out the importance of educating Muslim youth about the many occasions in which Americans have assisted Muslims throughout the world.

13. Secretary Chertoff expressed concern about the path that some young Muslims take from disagreement with policies to radicalization and, sometimes, terrorism. The central question, said Secretary Chertoff, is how societies should steer youth away from extremism. A major way to convince

youth of the senselessness of extremism, he continued, is greater discussion of Muslim extremist violence directed against other Muslims, which does nothing to advance Islam or solve political problems.

Lessons from the American Experience

14. When asked about the alleged loss of civil liberties in the U.S. as a consequence of counterterrorism measures, Secretary Chertoff responded that a balance must be struck

SIPDIS

between absolute security (which would be too costly in terms of limits on freedom) and returning to the status quo before 9/11 (which would be too great a security risk). When asked what specific measures Muslims in Germany should take to curb radicalization, Secretary Chertoff noted that lessons from the U.S. might not always be applicable to other societies, but added that the U.S. has successfully implemented Incident Management Teams. These teams of U.S. officials contact influential Muslim leaders to explain the reasons for U.S. counterterrorism actions and the dangers of specific terrorist plots. Ambassador and Mrs. Timken noted the importance of the International Visitor (IV) and Windows on America programs in our efforts to demonstrate true American values. The latter sends German youth with immigrant backgrounds to the U.S. for a first-hand view of American society, and thereby helps to dispel misperceptions.

Comment

15. Muslim leaders welcomed the opportunity to meet with Secretary Chertoff and Ambassador Timken. Muslim guests at

SIPDIS

this event were eager to have their pictures taken with Secretary Chertoff and one of them (with the agreement of the

SIPDIS

others) plans to publicize the event in his organization's newsletter. As was the case with Mission Germany's three

BERLIN 00000222 002 OF 002

previous Policy Roundtables, Post did not announce the event publicly or invite the press. However, Mission Germany will explore whether the growing comfort level with the Policy Roundtable concept can be used, perhaps by involving the media, to spread our message more broadly.

TIMKEN JR